

IN THE MANGER

DEVOTIONS TO
THE CHRIST CHILD



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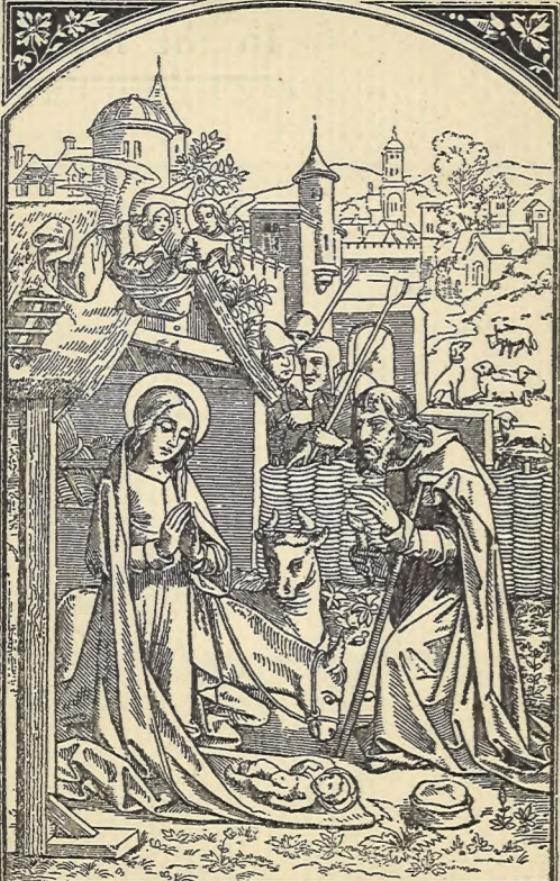
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In the Manger





Lucerna pedibus meis Verbum
tuum, & lumen semitis meis

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THE CHRISTI CHILD

From "Avrillon"

CANTERBURY BOOKS: 19

London

Society of SS. Peter & Paul

32 George St., Hanover Sq., W.
& 302 Regent St., W.

1915

IN THE MANGER

Devotions to the Christ Child

PRACTICE

BEHOLD, at length, the great day for which the earth hath sighed during so many ages ; behold the blessed accomplishment of the promises of all the Prophets, of the desires of all the Patriarchs, and of all the righteous men of the Old Law ; behold the blessed moment which draweth nigh, in

which our bonds and our chains will begin to be broken : we are about to be delivered from the cruel captivity of sin, of death, and of hell, that we may enjoy the liberty of the children of GOD, which will be procured for us by the divine Babe who is now to appear ; and Heaven is about to open on our behalf, through the supreme Deliverer whose Nativity takes place to-day in a mean stable and upon a miserable manger, between two beasts ; who will for our sakes

begin from this night the painful course of his Life, and who will run the race even unto the end “as a” mighty “Giant,” amid its fatigues, contradictions, humiliations, and sufferings, during thirty and three years, ever occupied in the most zealous and most laborious works of charity, in the conquest of souls, and who will finish it but by the most dreadful agonies, and in the eyes of men the most cruel and most shameful of deaths upon Calvary.

Pass this great Festival in the greatest piety and in the greatest fervour thou canst ; do nothing which beseemeth not the holiness of the day ; be ever either in prayer, or in aspiration, or in thanksgiving, or in feelings of tender love for that adorable Babe, or occupied in reading, or in the divine Word, or in the offices of the Church. Carefully keep thyself from yielding anything to-day to the world, nor even to permitted pleasures ; for every moment of this day,

which is a day of life, of grace, and of redemption, is infinitely precious, and thou shouldest use every means to be spiritually “regenerated” with JESUS CHRIST and to lose none of the graces attached to this great mystery.

Begin to celebrate this most solemn Feast from midnight, seeing that is the time in which our adorable Saviour was born : enter into the stable of Bethlehem in spirit, and leave it not during the day : JESUS being born in a stable, lying upon a

manger like the child of the poorest of men, is a subject worthy to occupy thy whole mind and thy whole heart, not only during the day in which it took place, but all the days of thy life besides. Take part with recollection and with Seraphic fervency at the Holy Mass, which is this day thrice celebrated,¹ to show us that all men

¹ The treble celebration of the Holy Mass on the nativity of the Lord is mentioned by Amalarius, a disciple of Alcuin, A.D. 830. It occurs in the sacramentary of Gelasius, A.D. 492. It is conjectured that the celebration at midnight is derived from the early times of persecution.

whether they have lived under the law of nature, under the written law, or live, or shall live, under the law of grace, have not been, and cannot be saved but by JESUS CHRIST, who is this day born.

Yet not, surely, without reference to the time of his Birth. In 830, it was so ancient, that it was ascribed to Telesphorus. S. Thomas Aquinas says, that by the 1st is signified the everlasting Nativity of the Father, to us hidden; by the 2nd, at day-break, the temporal and spiritual Nativity by grace, like the day-star in our hearts. (2 Pet. i. 19.) The 3rd, his temporal and corporeal Nativity, whereby he came forth visible to us from the Virgin's Womb clothed in flesh. Other interpretations are also given, the same fact being viewed in different ways. [From Dr. Pusey's note.]

In the Holy Eucharist thou shalt, with the deepest reverence, transfer JESUS, as it were, from his Cradle, that he may dwell in substance near thy heart by Holy Communion. Prepare thyself so fervently for this, that thou couldest warm the tender Flesh of the heavenly Babe through the fire of thy love, chilled as it is with cold in his Stable, and at the same time enkindle thy heart from the holy flames of love which incessantly burn in his.

Meditation upon the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL

Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.

(Luke ii. 12.)

THESE are the words which the “Angel of the LORD” addressed to the “Shepherds” who were “keeping watch over their flocks,” announcing to them the birth of GOD the

SAVIOUR ; hear them with reverence, for they address thee as well as the Shepherds ; join thyself with them ; go in spirit to that Stable which is so infinitely more venerable and reverend than the most magnificent palace of earth's greatest kings : first thou wilt find there a "Babe lying in a manger"; but this Babe is GOD. How wilt thou make the supreme greatness of GOD accord with the weakness of a Child ? What a miracle of mingled humility and love ! and

how powerful a motive for casting down or for condemning our pride, and for engaging us to love him with our whole heart !

If thou wast not enlightened by the light of faith, at the mere sight of that Stable, of that Manger, of those poor swaddling Clothes, and of that Infancy, wouldest thou not hesitate, and wouldest thou not ask thyself, hath not this Babe the lot of the ambitious worldling who is punished by the hand of GOD, because he has deserved the most

ignominious humiliations ? or doth he represent the just who humbleth himself through virtue, and through love, that he may be found worthy of the rewards promised to the humble ?

When thou fixest thy attention upon his extreme Poverty, dost thou not ask thyself if this Babe have not incurred the punishment of the rich miser, who has deserved to be despoiled of all his goods ; or is he the Model of the perfect Christian, who despiseth the riches of this

world, that he may be found worthy to possess those of Heaven ?

But, instructed by faith and by a multitude of glorious events, I reply, that JESUS CHRIST in the Manger is both the one and the other, and that his infinite love for men, which hath humbled and despoiled him, hath also engaged him to take upon himself the chastisement which those sinners deserved, and to serve as a rule and model for the holy. Thus, O my Saviour ! thou

art here my Surety, thou payest for me, and thou art the Example which I desire to imitate: I would humble and despoil myself, for I deserved it, and I desire to love thee and to follow thy steps.

SECOND PART

Consider yet more attentively this new-born Saviour; see what he suffers: he is a Babe just born; he is exposed in a stable, open on all sides to the severity of the season, in the

midst of winter and in the middle of the night, and lying on a hard manger; remember that this suffering Babe is GOD essentially blessed in himself; what thinkest thou of this blended joy and sorrow?

Seriously meditate at the foot of this Cradle; call faith to thy succour; she will tell thee that the Love of this Saviour for the world hath brought him, rejoicing as he is in the Fulness of the Divinity, to this painful state, for he purposeth to win

our heart, and he willeth, in order to make it worthy of the lovingkindnesses of his, to purify it and to disgust it with the voluptuousness of the senses through his sufferings, so as to procure for it more surely those pleasures which are pure and eternal.

With this view he cedeth all the rights which his essential Blessedness giveth him ; he voluntarily delivereth himself up to and abandoneth himself to the impression of anguish ; he sus-

pendeth, on my behalf, by a miracle of his Love, that communication of joy and pleasure which naturally ought to exist between his Divinity and Humanity ; he restraineth and eclipseth the overflowing of glory upon his Body, and permitteth that his Flesh should endure, what it was formed meet to endure, in order to satisfy the Justice of GOD for the criminal pleasures of which men are guilty, whilst waiting till he finish upon the Cross that Sacrifice of sorrow

which he beginneth to-day within the Stable : the time, the cold, the night, the place, all conspire to make him a Child of sorrow. How touching is this spectacle ! and what a condemnation of my self-indulgence and my cowardice ! and what a call to suffer henceforth for my sins and for his sake !

AFFECTIONS

In how strange a situation do I see thee here, O God Almighty,

GOD my Saviour ! Thou appearest to mine eyes, and thou art in verity, a Child ; thou art but lately born, and born that thou mayest die, and yet faith tells me that thou art the Eternal GOD : thy Nativity took place in a poor and forsaken Stable, yet Heaven is thy Dwelling-place ; in a Manger, and thy Throne is a Throne of glory ; placed between two beasts, and in Heaven thou art surrounded by Seraphim ; in the darkness of night, and thou art the Light which enlight-

eneth Heaven and earth ; thou sufferest cold, and the Prophets tell me thou art “a consuming Fire” ; upon hay as the poorest of all men, and thou art the Source of all treasures.

But, O my GOD ! must it be, that those for whom thou hast suffered so much, should now so outrage thee ? O Infancy of my JESUS, sign of his Humility, how despised art thou now by the proud and by the ambitious, who think that a vile creature is permitted unjustly to exalt him-

self, whilst his GOD and Saviour is abased, humbled, annihilated, in order to cure his pride and to save him ! Mean Swaddling Clothes of my new-born Saviour, how often are ye dishonoured, trampled under foot and torn by the lovers of wealth and of the world, who run after riches and vain adornments, whilst their sovereign LORD despoils himself of all, that he may inspire them with detachment from the world ! Stable of hardship, divine Sufferings of mine infant Saviour,

how little are ye known by the voluptuous and by self-indulgent worldlings, who desire to taste the false joys of the world, and to give themselves up to the pleasures of sense, whilst God made Man is in sorrow and in tears !

Pardon, O heavenly Babe ! look upon me with an Eye of pity at the foot of thy Manger, where I am prostrate in spirit, to adore thee, to offer thee my homage, to show thee my reverence and my love, and to ask

mercy of thee : give me grace to be born again with thee ; come and be thyself born anew in my heart, that thou mayest make it worthy to possess thee eternally in Heaven.

HOMAGE TO THE DIVINITY OF JESUS IN THE MANGER

O ye powers of Heaven, ye Cherubim shining with light, ye Seraphim burning with the most fervent and the purest love, impart to me both your light and your zeal, that I may know, that

I may love, that I may adore within the Manger that same DEITY, to whom ye incessantly offer your homage and your adorations in Heaven ; the DEITY in a Stable which serves him as a palace, in a Manger which serves him as a throne, in mortal Flesh and in the newly-formed body of a Babe, which serves him as a Sanctuary, and between two beasts, which serve as attendants upon the King of kings : GOD Almighty, enclosed and hidden under so many veils, he

who filleth Heaven and earth, O unheard-of prodigy ! O Miracle of miracles ! O ecstasy ! O transport ! which ought to overwhelm and rejoice all mortals, because for their sakes it is, and on their behalf, that GOD has willed to bring it to pass, and that the GOD of mercy hath become Man, in order that of men he should make gods.

Adorable Divinity, I offer thee my most reverential, my most loving homage, not upon the Throne of glory whereon thou

art in Heaven, amid the Seraphim, but in the Stable, but in the Body of a helpless Babe, wherein thou now residest: there thou “dwellest in the light which no man may approach unto,” and mine eyes are too weak to fix them upon an object so brilliant, upon a Sun so dazzling ; here thou art enclosed in an Infant’s Body, which mine eyes can bear ; I could not see GOD, but I can see a new-born Babe, and that Babe is my GOD, “for in him dwelleth all the Fulness

of the GODHEAD bodily.” There receive my homage, O my Saviour ! until I may offer it to thee, during a never-ending Eternity, upon thy Throne of glory in Heaven.

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